

FOR RELEASE

CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK TO THROW FREE AND INCLUSIVE BIRTHDAY PARTY IN SURREY



Vancouver, BC – In celebration of its 10-year anniversary, Canucks Autism Network (CAN) is thrilled to announce the first-ever CAN Birthday Festival, presented by Coast Capital Savings, slated for Saturday, July 7th, at Surrey Civic Plaza. Hosted by the City of Surrey, the CAN Birthday Festival will feature traditional birthday activities as well as some exciting additions, such as inflatables, food trucks, vendors, a dunk tank, and a host of live entertainment for the whole family, including performances by Bobs & Lolo and the Famous Players Band. The CAN Birthday Festival is open to the public with free admission.

- **10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. – Sensory-friendly hours**
- **12:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. – Public hours**

The inspiration behind the event came from the countless stories of children with autism who are excluded from birthday parties. In anticipation of the event, CAN mailed out handcrafted birthday invitations personally inviting more than 1,700 children and youth with autism to attend the celebration; marking the first-ever birthday invite for many of the recipients. Furthermore, CAN wanted to make the environment welcoming and accessible to individuals with autism and their families by providing sensory-friendly hours in the morning, before the event officially opens to the public. The sensory-friendly hours will boast shorter lineups, smaller crowds, and reduced volume. Noise-cancelling headphones will also be available for rental.

“We look forward to welcoming hundreds of children, youth, young adults and families with autism, as well as hundreds more from the general public,” said Katy Harandi, President and CEO of Canucks Autism Network. “The CAN Birthday Festival will be an unprecedented celebration of the incredible



successes that our thousands of members have accomplished throughout CAN's 10-year history."

Presented by Coast Capital Savings, the CAN Birthday Festival is backed by an organization that shares CAN's commitment to building community.

"At Coast Capital, we've made a promise to build a richer future for youth in the community," explains Maureen Young, Director, Community Leadership, Coast Capital Savings. "Our sponsorship of the CAN Birthday Festival is a great example of how we are living that promise. Canucks Autism Network provides meaningful sports and recreation opportunities for children and youth with autism across the province, ensuring their futures are bright and rich with opportunity."

The CAN Birthday Festival also highlights the deeply rooted impact that the organization has had in the Surrey community. With over 4,000 families within CAN's province-wide membership, approximately 15% are from the City of Surrey. According to the Ministry of Child and Family Development, Surrey has the highest number of children and youth with autism of any city within BC.

"The City of Surrey is extremely proud to join their celebration as the official Host Sponsor for the CAN Birthday Festival," said City of Surrey Mayor Linda Hepner. "Canucks Autism Network programs have been a vital resource in our community for years, allowing children, youth and young adults with autism to build confidence in themselves through sports and rec opportunities, while gaining a love for being active in their community."

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ABOUT CANUCKS AUTISM NETWORK (CAN):

Founded by Vancouver Canucks Co-owners Paolo and Clara Aquilini in 2008, Canucks Autism Network (CAN) provides year-round sports and recreation programs to individuals and families living with autism, while increasing awareness and providing training in communities across British Columbia.

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